

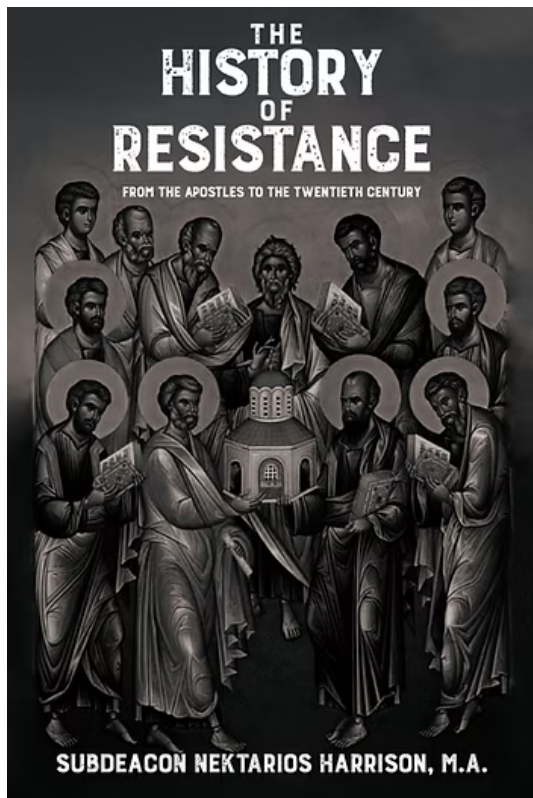
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Saint Justin Popovich On Canon 15: An Excerpt from the History of Resistance

By Subdeacon Nektarios, M.A.

According to many in the "Orthobro" community, who are either entirely ignorant or in some cases outright deceitful, they continually insist that one cannot canonically break communion with a bishop who publicly preaches heresy until an Ecumenical Council is convened to condemn that heresy. This claim is found nowhere in the history of the Church until these heretical, micro-famous YouTubers began promoting it.



However, as we see in the writings of the famous non-commemorating saint, Justin Popovich, particularly in his *Life of Saint Photios the Great*, there exists a clear historical account that explains why the canon was written and what its criteria are. The two criteria are that the bishop is publicly preaching a heresy already condemned by either a Council or the Holy Fathers and that breaking communion with such a bishop may, without any equivocation, occur prior to an official conciliar condemnation. Why they continue to lie and distort the truth is for them to answer. We, on the other hand, can read the Fathers for ourselves. Here is a brief excerpt from my recently published historical volume, "The History of Resistance: From the Apostles to the Twentieth Century," which details the authentic Orthodox ecclesiological response to publicly preaching heretics. All of this demonstrates that the so-called "Resist Within Movement" is nothing less than a-historical and, most of all, an ecclesiological heresy that promotes a form of Eastern Rite Orthodox Presbyterianism.

EXCERPT FROM
The History of Resistance: From the Apostles to the Twentieth Century



Canon 15 of the First-Second Council of Constantinople and the Canonical Separation from a Heretical Hierarchy

Examining the issue of breaking communion with a heretical bishop requires a holistic approach, which has included an examination of the scriptures, scriptural commentaries, writings of the saints, historical examples of the fathers and liturgical texts, and also must include an examination of the canons. Specifically, we must look at the canon that permits a clergyman to break communion with a hierarchy who is teaching heresy bareheaded. This canon, which permits a clergyman to separate from a heretical hierarchy without creating a schism and for which there can be no canonical punishment, is Canon 15 of the First-Second Council of Constantinople, 861 A.D.

This council in Constantinople, which would produce Canon 15, arose out of the controversy between Pope Nicholas, Saint Photios the Great, who had been newly elected to the patriarchal see of Constantinople, and the unjustly condemned former patriarch of Constantinople, Ignatius. To understand the environment that Canon 15 was written in and the reasons for it being written, we have to look back in time and learn some of the history behind it all. In the Life of Saint Photios by Saint Justin Popovich, he explains the history of this council, saying,

Maintaining his meekness, his love for order, and the canons of the Church, St. Photios called a second Council to convene in the Church of the Holy Apostles in the spring of 861, with the approval of Emperor Michael. This assembly later came to be known as the First-Second Council. Many bishops, including the representatives of Pope Nicholas, were in attendance. All confirmed the determinations of the holy Seventh Ecumenical Council, once more condemning the iconoclast heresy, and accepted Photios as the lawful and canonical patriarch. At this council, seventeen holy canons were promulgated with the purpose of bringing disobedient monks and bishops into harmony with ecclesiastical order and tradition. The disobedient monks were expressly forbidden to desert their lawful bishop under the excuse of the bishop's supposed sinfulness, for such brings disorder and schism to the Church. The holy Council, however, did distinguish between unreasonable rebellion and laudable resistance for the defense of the faith, which it encouraged. In regard to this matter it decreed that should a bishop publicly confess some heresy already condemned by the Holy Fathers and previous councils, one who ceases to commemorate such a bishop even *before conciliar condemnation* not only is not to be censured, but should be praised as condemning a false bishop. In so doing, moreover, he is not dividing the Church, but struggling for the unity of the Faith (Canon Fifteen).

Saint Justin Popovich in his brief but detailed explanation of why the First-Second Council was called and why these canons were established gives as a clear picture that breaking communion with a heretical bishop is entirely permissible [1].

Available Here

References

[1]. Subdeacon Nektarios Harrison, *The History of Resistance: From the Apostles to the Twentieth Century* (Washington, DC: Orthodox Traditionalist Publications, 2024), 145-146.

[Back to Top](#)